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New York

President:	Mrs. Haley	(United States of America)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Llorentty Soliz
	China	Mr. Wu Haitao
	Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Adom
	Equatorial Guinea	Mr. Ndong Mba
	Ethiopia	Ms. Guadey
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Umarov
	Kuwait	Mr. Alotaibi
	Netherlands	Mr. Van Oosterom
	Peru	Mr. Meza-Cuadra
	Poland	Ms. Wronecka
	Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
	Sweden	Mr. Skoog
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Ms. Pierce

Agenda

Cooperation between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations in maintaining international peace and security

The situation in Nicaragua

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Cooperation between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations in maintaining international peace and security

The situation in Nicaragua

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Costa Rica, Nicaragua and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to participate in this meeting.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome His Excellency Mr. Denis Ronaldo Moncada Colindres, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nicaragua.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Gonzalo Koncke, Chief of Staff to the Secretary General of the Organization of American States, and Mr. Felix Maradiaga, civil society leader and former Secretary-General of the Ministry of Defence of Nicaragua.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I now give the floor to Mr. Koncke.

Mr. Koncke (*spoke in Spanish*): I am grateful for the invitation extended to the General Secretariat of the Organization of American States (OAS) to participate in this Security Council meeting and to brief it on the efforts that the General Secretariat has been undertaking in Nicaragua, as well as to provide an overview of the situation from the perspective of a regional organization. I wish to convey the greetings of OAS Secretary General Luis Almagro.

The situation involving death, violence, repression and political and social crisis in Nicaragua is the subject of extreme concern in the western hemisphere. The OAS General Secretariat is closely following the situation in the country, which, according to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), has resulted in 322 deaths since 18 April. Among the dead are 23 children and adolescents, as well as a number of detained persons. We also lament the deaths of 21 police officers between 18 April and 24 August. Tragically, the number of deaths in the country has been increasing. Again according to the IACHR, 76 people had died by the end of May, 212 by the end of June, 264 by the end of July and, as I said earlier, 322 by the end of August. As has unfortunately become routine, the OAS General Secretariat extends its condolences to the families and friends of the victims.

As is well known, the OAS Secretariat is continuously following the situation with a growing sense of concern at the loss of life and the deterioration of democracy and political and social coexistence in the country, as well as the corresponding effect on the economic situation, which disproportionately impacts the most vulnerable. Since 18 April, in line with the Inter-American Democratic Charter and its own Charter, the OAS has employed the tools at its disposal in the quest for peace, democracy, the rule of law, justice, truth and the re-establishment of the institutional order in the country. In that context, Secretary General Almagro secured authorization from the Government of Nicaragua for an IACHR mission to the country, which took place from 17 to 21 May and produced 15 recommendations that form the basis for the restoration of respect for, and the promotion of, human rights. Likewise, on 30 May, the Secretary General, the Government of Nicaragua and the IACHR Executive Secretary signed a document on the establishment of the Interdisciplinary Group of Independent Experts (GIEI), in line with recommendation 3 of the IACHR preliminary report.

Moreover, the Special Monitoring Mechanism for Nicaragua (MESENI) was established in the country pursuant to recommendation 15 of the preliminary report, mandated, as its name indicates, with monitoring the human rights situation on an ongoing basis. Similarly, the General Secretariat of the OAS has been working with the Government of Nicaragua for the necessary electoral reforms that will identify democratic solutions through popular expression in the country.

The Permanent Council of the OAU set out its position on the situation in Nicaragua in resolution 1108/18 of 18 July, by which, among other things, it reiterated

> "its vigorous condemnation of and grave concern over all acts of violence, repression, and human rights violations and abuses committed by police, parapolice groups, and others against the people

> of Nicaragua, as documented by the IACHR; to encourage that steps be taken to identify the individuals responsible, through the corresponding legal procedures; and to demand that parapolice groups be disbanded".

Similarly, the Permanent Council has created a working group composed of 12 countries in order to provide solutions to a problem of concern to the entire region.

It is regrettable that the situation in the country has not improved in terms of democracy, respect for human rights and social and political coexistence. The 322 deaths that I mentioned earlier were the result of repression, violence, the actions of irregular armed pro-Government groups, and violations of human rights. In its report of 22 June, the IACHR concluded that the State of Nicaragua had infringed on the rights to life, personal integrity, health, personal freedom, assembly, freedom of expression and access to justice. The Commission found especially worrisome

> "the assassinations, extrajudicial executions, abusive treatment, possible acts of torture and arbitrary detentions committed against the country's majority young population".

The IACHR conclusions concerning repeated violations delegitimize the Nicaraguan Government. The OAS General Secretariat believes that this process of delegitimation must end as soon as possible.

As pointed out by Secretary General Almagro, the solution for Nicaragua incontestably requires peace, truth, justice and democracy. To ensure truth and justice, it will be necessary for the Government of Nicaragua to facilitate and cooperate with the work of GIEI and MESENI, provide free access to places of interest, documents and necessary files, grant guarantees and facilities, offer the prescriptive answers of the State and not to hinder the work of those bodies. These are the fundamental demands that the General Secretariat of the OAS has made of the Nicaraguan Government.

In the same way, the General Secretariat of the OAS asserts that there can be no genuine solution for Nicaragua without heeding the voice of its people through the holding of free, fair, democratic and transparent elections, in accordance with inter-American standards. In that regard, the General Secretariat reiterates its invitation to the Government of Nicaragua to resume and accelerate the work that is being done with the Nicaraguan State to ensure that the pertinent electoral reforms are completed by January 2019, as agreed by both parties.

Secretary General Almagro has openly stated his opinion that the more timely holding of elections will be critical and represents a genuine solution to the crisis of democracy in the country. In situations of maximum polarization and tension, the validation of the voice of the people in the polls is the necessary path. The date for the holding of elections should be agreed among Nicaraguans — there is no other way — but we believe it essential to consult with the sources of political power. It is also important that the Government and the opposition, represented by the Civic Alliance for Justice and Democracy, revisit the possibility of holding talks that could lead to good-faith agreements between the parties, in which the participation of the Nicaraguan Episcopal Conference would be critical.

In conclusion, Nicaragua is at a crossroads on which its peace, democracy and future depend. We believe that this crossroads could have been avoided because the inter-American system has tools that it has made available to the Nicaraguans to find solutions, including electoral reforms and electoral monitoring to identify the will of the Nicaraguan people, and GIEI and MESENI to promote truth justice. At the centre of this crossroads is the Nicaraguan Government, on which depend the decision-making and the democratic gestures that will restore the country's institutions and find the path to the rule of law. After 18 April, we cannot apply to Nicaragua the same tools that led to the tragedy, because that would lead to more confrontation and more suffering for the people.

It is necessary to apply irreversibly democratic mechanisms that will restore to the Nicaraguan people the possibility of choosing and reviving political coexistence. At this crossroads, the Nicaraguan Government can opt for the revival of democratic institutions. There is still time to do so. Failure to do so would be to choose the erroneous path taken by other countries of the region that have fallen into dictatorial Governments in which the rule of law and democracy do not exist and that have led their people into misery, social and family disintegration, and emigration.

In the Americas in particular, crises of democracy and human rights affect more than just the country they afflict. The example of the migration crisis originated by the Venezuelan regime must serve as a warning. Nicaragua is not in a position to endure the exacerbation

of a social, economic and political crisis. At the same time, we in the General Secretariat of the OAS believe that Central America is not in a position to endure the exacerbation of a crisis of democracy and human rights in Nicaragua that amplifies migratory variables, encourages the actions of criminal gangs, and ends up generating elements harmful to regional stability and security.

That is why the General Secretariat of the OAS will continue advocating to find solutions for the country. We reiterate to the Nicaraguan Government the need to advance jointly in the work of electoral reform, agree on an electoral calendar for Nicaragua, facilitate the tasks of the Interdisciplinary Group of Independent Experts and the Special Monitoring Mechanism for Nicaragua, and resume dialogue, with guarantees of non-repetition, in order to achieve peace, justice and human rights in the country.

The President: I thank Mr. Koncke for his briefing. We certainly appreciate the time he has taken to come to brief the Council on the situation in Nicaragua. We also appreciate the Organization of American States getting involved and taking charge of something that is happening in the region that we view with concern.

I now give the floor to Mr. Maradiaga.

Mr. Maradiaga (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank you, Madam President, for your leadership in placing the situation in Nicaragua on the agenda.

Few nations of the world have had such a difficult history of seeking peace as Nicaragua. The armed conflict that we suffered in the 1980s, which caused thousands of deaths and destabilized all of Central America, is still fresh in our memory. In that cyclical history of conflicts, Nicaragua has enjoyed the help of the international community when too much blood has already been spilled. I come before the Council to convey the urgency of a situation that threatens the peace and security of an entire region, as can be clearly deduced from the more than 23,000 Nicaraguan refugees who, in less than four months, have had to leave for neighbouring Costa Rica .

I know from my own experience the consequences of a conflict that spins out of control and expands throughout a region when it could have been prevented using the instruments allowed by the Charter of the United Nations and the inter-American system. When I was 12 years old, I lived in a refugee camp in the state of Texas, after having crossed alone, as an undocumented person, the border between Mexico and the United States of America, trying to escape the armed conflict in Nicaragua. I returned to Nicaragua in 1990, full of enthusiasm for the reconstruction of my country.

The experiences of my childhood defined my commitment to human rights, disarmament and non-violence. It was thus that, in 2003, I became a Disarmament Fellow thanks to a United Nations programme here at Headquarters. A short time later, I returned to Nicaragua and started an academic programme to train emerging youth leaders in the principles of the culture of peace in my country.

It was through my contacts as a university professor that, on the night of 20 April, I received desperate calls from several of my students. One of those calls, with the noise of firearms in the background, still tears at my heart. They said to me: "Professor, they are killing us — help us". That day, hundreds of young university students sought refuge in Managua Cathedral after Nicaraguan police shot at protesters indiscriminately. That afternoon, Álvaro Conrado, a 15-year-old boy, who went out to give the students water, died from a gunshot wound to the neck.

Over the next few weeks, I watched in awe as tens of thousands of people peacefully took to the streets to protest for their civil rights. In April, like thousands of Nicaraguans, I joined several ad hoc groups to help the wounded who had not been admitted to public hospitals. I do not have time today to talk about the pain of seeing the bodies of so many young people shot by snipers. On 30 May, at the Mother's Day march, I saw a teenager's brains blown out by a bullet before my very eyes. I personally managed to survive an attack on 28 May, when paramilitaries tried to shoot me a few yards from my office.

One of the most worrying aspects of this crisis is the criminalization of civil protest through the enactment of an anti-terrorism law that classifies any civic act of protest as terrorism. I was one of the first to be officially denounced, on 3 June, when the police apparatus that serves the Government accused me of terrorism and organized crime while I was in Washington, D.C., meeting with the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. That accusation has been a kind of death sentence for me, because since then I have received hundreds of death threats, police

and paramilitaries have surrounded my home and office, and my family members have been intimidated.

On 11 July, a group of at least 20 paramilitaries stopped my car. When they recognized me, they made me get out and detained me and my companions, keeping AK-47 rifles and other high-calibre weapons trained on me the whole time. They asked me if I was ready to die. In a video that they recorded themselves, which went viral, they released me unharmed, saying, "Thank Commander Ortega that you are still alive." They said they had not yet been given permission to kill me. However, on 13 July, while I was meeting privately with students in the city of León, more than 30 people broke into the meeting room and beat me up, leaving me with several fractures. As I was being attacked by these Government-associated groups, I felt the same agony that I had experienced at 12 years old when I swam a freezing river to cross the border, with the feeling that I had lost the right to live peacefully in the country of my birth.

Despite the pain, I now have the opportunity to tell the Council my story, while the voices of hundreds of other Nicaraguans have been silenced forever. More than 300 people, which is a highly conservative estimate, have been murdered, including a friend of mine, the journalist Ángel Gahona, who was shot in the head at the beginning of the crisis. My colleagues Cristhian Fajardo and his wife Maria Adilia are in jail, as are the leaders of the Movimiento Campesino, Medardo Mairena and Pedro Mena, as well as Irlanda Jerez and the university leaders Levis Rugama, Yaritza Mairena, Victoria Obando, Edwin Carcache and Alejandro Centeno. Another 240 other activists have been imprisoned for participating in the protests, and the number of political prisoners continues to rise.

Today Nicaragua has become a huge prison that pretends to be under control. However, an atmosphere of terror and indiscriminate persecution reigns every day. Masked gunmen, accompanied by police, burst into private Nicaraguan homes without a warrant. They consider possessing a blue-and-white national flag to be a crime. Human rights defenders and religious leaders of all denominations are being persecuted and threatened with death. Paramilitary groups have been invading private homes, arresting citizens at random and taking away their mobile phones. The slightest trace on a phone of an anti-Government tweet or message means imprisonment and serious forms of torture, such as genital amputation or the forced anal penetration of men and women using objects such as guns and rifles. There are doctors in Washington, D.C., today who are testifying under oath about the diagnoses that they have made of that type of violation. Nicaragua is becoming a country without hope.

I realize that there are many crises in the world and that the international community must prioritize its efforts, and I sympathize with that. However, for more than a decade, Daniel Ortega's regime has benefited from being under the international radar. We are currently facing a situation that, in addition to causing unprecedented widespread atrocities within Nicaragua, is creating dangerous instability in a volatile region of the world. This is not just another human rights crisis that can be resolved internationally. This is a State policy of mass and systematic violence against unarmed civilians. A time bomb is ticking in Nicaragua. Crimes against humanity are taking place every day, creating an environment conducive to an internal conflict of major proportions that we still have time to prevent. That will require the engaged attention of the United Nations if we are to ensure peace and security before it is too late.

With regard to the Security Council's mandate, I call on it to consider adopting a specific resolution on the critical situation in Nicaragua. I ask the members to allocate resources and create monitoring mechanisms for Nicaragua and for disarming the paramilitary groups. I recommend that the United Nations support the process of restoring the rule of law in Nicaragua. I leave the Council with the cry of a country that while small in size is huge in its desire to have a new opportunity for peace and justice.

The President: I want to say that this is the reason we are having this Security Council meeting, because the international community needs to pay attention to the situation in Nicaragua. I thank Mr. Maradiaga for giving the Nicaraguan people a voice and for taking the time to be at this meeting. It is important for us to hear his statement.

I now give the floor to those Council members who wish to make statements.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Madam President, on the United States delegation's assumption of the presidency of the Council, and to wish you every success.

However, I will begin my statement not with words of gratitude for organizing today's meeting but rather by affirming our firm position. The Russian Federation is categorically opposed to a discussion of the situation in Nicaragua in the Security Council. We have major concerns about the invited briefers. I am not sure that the members of the Council who supported the format of today's meeting grasp the potential consequences if this type of practice should continue. What message can the Security Council send if it is clearly split on a particular issue? What value does it add to our discussion overall? Does the Council's mandate really include putting pressure on the authorities of a sovereign State to force it to make changes, whatever they may be, and thereby conniving with anti-Government forces? After today's discussion, the polarization in Nicaragua can only worsen. It is difficult not to believe that that is what the ringleaders of today's meeting had in mind.

We see support for this notion in that some people cannot deal with the fact that there are States in the world capable of carrying out self-sufficient, independent policies in the interests of their citizens while not playing up to the regional ambitions of major Powers. Instead of building relations with such States on a basis of mutual respect, they all rush to inflict maximum damage on their economies in order to provoke social unrest and foment intolerance with the sole purpose of achieving regime change. It is extremely regrettable that international and regional organizations are getting involved in these processes.

The initiators of today's discussion are trying to ignore the fact that thanks to the Government's efforts, the situation in the country has recently stabilized. The outstanding disagreements should be resolved through a direct, peaceful dialogue, without destructive outside pressure.

I want to say it once again. It is obvious to us that the issue of Nicaragua has no place on the Security Council's agenda. The Council is responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security, and the domestic political situation in Nicaragua does not pose those kinds of threats. Rather, it is a vivid, sad example of destructive outside interference. And what we heard at the beginning of this morning's meeting compels us to conclude that the Security Council appears to be becoming something like a court of trial for Nicaragua.

Taking the words of its initiators on faith, an unsophisticated listener could get the impression that the United States really cares about Nicaraguans. It is no secret to anyone, however, that Washington's subversive relationship to Managua has a long history. The fact of the open interference of the United States in Nicaragua's internal affairs was confirmed by the 27 July 1986 decision of the International Court of Justice in The Hague with regard to the so-called Iran-Contra affair, when the United States tried to circumvent its own laws in order to finance Nicaraguan insurgents.

And since the American presidency of the Council has used a regional rationale in order to shovel the Nicaraguan issue onto the Security Council's agenda, we should not fail to mention some examples of Washington's interference in the internal affairs of other Latin American States as well. Cubans have never forgotten the Bay of Pigs invasion; Chileans are unlikely to forget the role that the United States played in overthrowing the Government of Salvador Allende; and to this very day Venezuelans are still receiving direct threats of the use of military force, which is a gross violation of the Charter of the United Nations. And all of that is far from being Washington's complete record of service in one region alone. I have not even touched on earlier episodes, or the Monroe Doctrine, which, it is true, has not been in operation with regard to Europe for a long time. The peoples of Africa, Asia, the Middle East and the Pacific also have some things to say about this issue. Against the backdrop of this dictatorial policy, which you do not even bother to disguise, Madam President, your accusations about third countries' mythical interference in American domestic political life with the supposed goal of undermining America's great democracy look particularly clumsy.

We in the United Nations talk a lot about the importance of conflict prevention. And we often hear claims that human rights situations are indicators of looming crises. In fact, as we have once again been convinced today, blatant interference in the affairs of a sovereign State has replaced so-called preventive diplomacy and is discrediting the very notion of preventive diplomacy itself. Reality is presenting us with more and more examples of the fact that the concept of human rights violations as indicators of conflict is one of trickery and hypocrisy. More often than not the reality is just the opposite — it is conflicts, including those stirred up from outside, that result in major violations of human rights. So let us not interfere

in the internal processes of sovereign States. After all, you yourself are always exhorting everyone about that, Madam President. Or is it only others who are not allowed to do it?

We call on Washington to refrain from its efforts in the colonial tradition to influence the situation in Nicaragua, and in particular those specifically aimed at it, such as its Nicaraguan Investment Conditionality Act initiative, its visa and other restrictions on Nicaraguan officials and the abolition of temporary protected status for migrants from Nicaragua. And if the United States is really concerned about the situation of Nicaraguan citizens, it would be logical to lift the economic restrictions that have been imposed on them for political reasons. We genuinely hope that all of Nicaragua's political forces will demonstrate common sense and will work consistently to establish constructive and respecful cooperation within the framework of its existing laws and Constitution.

Mr. Alotaibi (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank Mr. Gonzalo Koncke, Chief of Staff to the Secretary-General of the Organization of American States, and Mr. Felix Maradiaga for their valuable briefings. I would also like to welcome Mr. Denis Moncada Colindres, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nicaragua, to our meeting.

We are here today in the absence of a consensus among the members of the Security Council on holding this meeting. In that regard, we note Article 34 of Chapter VI of the Charter of the United Nations, which states that

> "The Security Council may investigate any dispute or any situation which might lead to international friction or give rise to a dispute, in order to determine whether the continuance of the dispute or situation is likely to endanger the maintenance of international peace and security."

That underscores the role of the Security Council to apply preventive diplomacy in order to prevent conflicts and address situations and crises as early as possible if there are any early-warning signs of such conflicts that could endanger international peace and security, in accordance with the Council's mandate as outlined in Article 24 of the Charter.

Regional and subregional organizations also play an essential role in dealing with regional issues before they escalate, as expressed in Article 52 of the Charter, which calls for enabling them to deal with matters relating to the maintenance of international peace and security provided that such activities are consistent with the purposes and principles of the United Nations. All such preventive measures in the Charter are available to the Security Council so that it can address crises at an early stage and often prevent conflicts and destabilization. Preventive diplomacy has been one of the priorities of the State of Kuwait during its membership of the Council, as we believe that addressing unrest and crises at an early stage can spare enormous losses on the financial, economic, and political fronts, and especially losses of human life.

We are concerned about the recent events in Nicaragua and regret the violence and the many dead and wounded. We underscore the importance of holding the perpetrators accountable and averting similar incidents in the future. We call on the parties concerned to abide by international humanitarian law and international human rights law. We also urge that a national dialogue be launched in good faith, aimed at reaching a peaceful solution to the crisis and avoiding repercussions that could affect security and destabilize Nicaragua and the region. This should be done while taking into consideration the interest of the country and the the people's right to a free and dignified life. We therefore urge the Government of Nicaragua to continue taking the steps necessary to de-escalate tensions and cooperating with all the relevant parties, including the Organization of American States, in order to get through this difficult period.

The State of Kuwait emphasizes the importance of acting based on the principles established in international law for addressing such situations. We also emphasize our full commitment to the principles stipulated in Article 2 of the Charter, which call for respecting States' sovereignty and refraining from interfering in their internal affairs.

Ms. Pierce (United Kingdom): This is the first time I am taking the floor under your presidency, Madam President, so I would like to congratulate you and your team on your assumption of the stewardship of the Council for September. I would also like to thank Mr. Koncke of the Organization of American States (OAS) for his informative briefing and Mr. Maradiaga for his harrowing testimony.

I think the Ambassador of Kuwait very clearly set out the legal framework under the Charter of the United

Nations for why we are having this debate today, and we are grateful to the United States delegation for putting it on the Council's agenda. I will not rehearse that legal framework, since in my view Ambassador Alotaibi gave a very good account of it, but what I do want to say is that it is right that the Council is made aware by the regional organization concerned of that organization's concerns and of the worry that this could begin to have effects throughout the region. I do not think we should ever reach a stage where the Council cannot hear from a regional organization about its concerns about what is happening in territory for which it is responsible.

But more than that, I think we also need to remember that the Nicaraguan Government has expelled a United Nations agency — the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). I think that is a very important fact, independent of the points regarding regional organizations and Chapter VI of the Charter of the United Nations. The Council needs to defend the United Nations entities. Therefore, even if there were no other reason, we would support discussing this issue today.

Lastly, I note that there has been a situation of refugees created. By definition, refugees cross international borders. It is therefore right that the Council should be able to debate the implications of that act, which may or may not constitute an unfriendly act, but also risks being destabilizing to international peace and security. I am not making a judgement that it is destabilizing but, as we heard from the Kuwaiti representative, the Council has the responsibility to investigate situations that may give rise to those implications — and I stress the word "may". I think that is exactly what we are doing today.

My Government has been watching the events in Nicaragua very closely. We regret the loss of life that has occurred since the protests began in April, and we call for an end to the violence and for the Government of Nicaragua to comply with its international human rights obligations. Those obligations include the people's right to freedom of expression and to demonstrate peacefully and lawfully. We have been deeply concerned by the excessive use of force by the authorities and pro-Government paramilitaries against the people of Nicaragua.

We call on the Nicaraguan Government to demobilize paramilitary groups and to end the repression against its citizens. We have been alarmed by the many reports we have seen that give rise to human rights concern. Those include the use of live ammunition against protesters. We call for those reports to be thoroughly investigated.

Maintaining press freedoms is always important. It is particularly so during times of unrest. We urge the Nicaraguan Government to respect those freedoms and to allow the independent press to report freely, without suffering persecution and harassment. And we are very concerned at reports of violence against independent media outlets, journalists and their families.

I would also like to register our deep concern about reports of arbitrary detentions of dissenters. Again, we urge the Nicaraguan Government to respect the right to a fair trial and prisoners' right to due process, a proper defence and to respect the rights of their families.

Looking ahead, I think we are all aware that the challenges in Nicaragua can be overcome only through a meaningful and inclusive dialogue that addresses the legitimate concerns of the protesters. The United Kingdom was encouraged by the establishment of a national dialogue in May. We welcome the role that the Episcopal Conference of Nicaragua was able to play in convening that dialogue and mediating, but we regret that the dialogue has had many breaks because of the violence, and the recent decision by the Government to abandon the process is very regrettable. I once again urge the Nicaragua Government to fulfil its commitment to engaging sincerely in a dialogue, including by ensuring peaceful conditions for the dialogue to resume.

Turning to the OAS, the United Kingdom supports its work. We also support the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, and of course the United Nations, in attempting to resolve the current crisis. Those organizations have important roles to play in supporting dialogue and ensuring that human rights transgressions are fully investigated. I referred earlier to the expulsion of OHCHR. That followed the publication of its report on human rights violations and abuses in the context of protests in Nicaragua. I would like to urge the Nicaraguan Government to reconsider that decision, to permit the OAS working group to enter the Nicaragua to carry out its important work and not to impede the work of the Interdisciplinary Group of Independent Experts established by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights.

In conclusion, a return to peace and security in Nicaragua benefits not only the people of Nicaragu

but also the whole region. We heard from the Russian representative a long catalogue of history. History is important. It provides context, but it is not the reason we are here today. We are here today for all the arguments Ambassador Alotaibi and I set out at the beginning — we want to see stability, we want the violence to end and we hope and urge the Nicaraguan Government to engage meaningfully in an inclusive and constructive dialogue and to ensure that all human rights transgressions are fully investigated.

The President: I personally thank the United Kingdom for its presidency last month and for its delegation's work.

Mr. Meza-Cuadra (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, we congratulate you, Madam President, for having assumed the presidency of the Security Council for the month of September. You can count on our delegation's support for a successful mandate. We also wish to congratulate Ambassador Karen Pierce and the delegation of the United Kingdom on their successful presidency during the month of August. And we welcome the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nicaragua.

We also welcome the holding of this meeting and the briefing on the situation in Nicaragua, as presented by Mr. Gonzalo Koncke, from the Organization of American States (OAS), and Mr. Felix Maradiaga, civil society leader in Nicaragua.

My delegation finds the holding of this meeting relevant under Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations, which, among other things, provides that the Council must be kept fully informed of the activities undertaken by regional organizations for the maintenance of international peace and security.

Peru looks on with great concern at the situation in Nicaragua, which is being monitored by the OAS. We reiterate our emphatic condemnation of the grave violence that has led to the regrettable loss of hundreds of human lives, thousands injured and an indeterminate number of missing persons. Our concern and condemnation applies to all repressive acts and violations of human rights committed by police and paramilitary groups, which, as has been noted, include extrajudicial executions, forced disappearances, cases of torture and sexual violence in detention centres, as well as attacks against the clergy and the press.

We underline that such acts have been duly documented by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and, more recently, by the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees, among other independent specialized agencies. We highlight that the majority of anti-Government citizen protests have been peaceful. Nevertheless, we also regret that attacks against Government employees — Government party members and security force personnel — have been carried out.

Peru and the OAS Permanent Council have demanded the immediate cessation of violence and intimidation, including selective prosecution and arbitrary detention. We also call for the dismantling of paramilitary groups and for those responsible for human rights violations to be held accountable through fair trials. The OAS, pursuant to its founding Charter, as well as the American Convention on Human Rights and the Inter-American Democratic Charter — binding instruments to which Nicaragua is a signatory party — has urged Nicaragua and all parties to engage in dialogue with a view to generating peaceful and sustainable solutions, thereby strengthening democracy.

In order to contribute to that effort, the OAS has created a working group for Nicaragua, in which Peru is an active participant, alongside elevn other member States. The group has repeatedly expressed its willingness to engage in constructive dialogue with the Government of Nicaragua. Regrettably, that offer has thus far been rejected and the Government of Nicaragua has limited its cooperation with various entities of the inter-American and United Nations systems, including the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Peru notes with deep concern the ongoing status quo in favour of impunity, which has been forcing tens of thousands of Nicaraguans to seek refuge in neighbouring countries and could ultimately lead to new acts of violence, which must be prevented. Given that and the recommendations made by the Secretary-General in his recent report on the role of regional organizations in conflict prevention and resolution, we consider it appropriate that the members of the Council be duly informed and that they be able to express their support for OAS efforts to promote a peaceful and sustainable solution in Nicaragua. Once again, we urge the Government of Nicaragua to take advantage of the good offices available and to resume dialogue with all parties, within the framework of its internal order and the inter-American system and in accordance with international law and international human rights law.

In conclusion, we recall that Peru's commitment to peace, stability and democracy in our region, and in particular in Nicaragua, is neither new nor foreign to the history of the Council. Last century, in the 1980s, through the efforts of the so-called Contadora support group, Peru actively contributed to achieving sustainable, democratic and inclusive peace in Central America. Today we reaffirm our commitment to and solidarity with the brotherly Nicaraguan people, while reiterating our readiness to assist in finding peaceful and sustainable solutions and in continuing to consolidate Latin America and the Caribbean as a region of peace.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): As this is the first time I am taking the floor in the Security Council during the month of September, allow me to begin by warmly congratulating the United Kingdom on its presidency of the Council in August and wishing every success to the United States presidency. It can rest assured of the resolute support of France and on my support, in particular.

First of all, I would like to thank our two briefers, Mr. Gonzalo Koncke, Chief of Staff to the Secretary General of the Organization of American States, and Mr. Felix Maradiaga, former Secretary General of the Ministry of Defence of Nicaragua, for their very insightful briefings. I would also like to welcome the Nicaraguan Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Denis Moncada, to the Council.

Since last April, there have been more than 300 deaths and 2,000 injuries in Nicaragua as a result of the violent suppression of demonstrations and numerous incidents. Once again, the Council faces a crisis with potential regional consequences, in particular in terms of the movement of people, including refugees. It is clear that the Council has the responsibility to support and assist conflict-prevention diplomacy in this and other crisis situations, while maintaining a watchful eye on the situation, without ideology and in full respect for the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. France has had the opportunity, either in public or in private face-to-face meetings with the Nicaraguan authorities, to express its expectations for a peaceful settlement of the current situation. Today, I will focus on three aspects of the crisis that deserve our full attention.

The first and perhaps most urgent issue is an end to the repression. France calls on the Nicaraguan Government to put an end to arbitrary arrests, the excessive use of force and all pressure exerted on demonstrators, human rights defenders and persons critical of the Government, including through violent groups. In that regard, we strongly condemn the violence perpetrated by paramilitary units, in particular the kidnapping on 20 August of attorney Carlos Cárdenas Zepeda, and the intimidation and arrests of representatives of trade unions and human rights organizations. It is the primary responsibility of the Government to ensure the safety of its people and respect for their rights. All judicial proceedings against persons who have been arrested must be conducted according to the rule of law. If they are not, the Nicaraguan authorities will gradually lose all legitimacy and the stability of the Nicaraguan State will ultimately be undermined. More than ever, France believes that respect for fundamental rights is the cornerstone of legitimacy and political stability in Nicaragua and elsewhere.

My second point concerns national dialogue. France calls on the Nicaraguan Government to preserve the national dialogue process, which was launched under the auspices of the Episcopal Conference of Nicaragua. The national dialogue is essential to a peaceful and negotiated resolution to the current crisis and to progress in discussions on democratization and justice. We deplore the fact that it has stalled. It should be noted that the Civic Alliance for Justice and Democracy has officially requested the resumption of such dialogue and the Episcopal Conference has recently expressed its readiness to pursue its mediation work. It is now up to the Nicaraguan Government to take this opportunity to start a credible national dialogue process, without preconditions, with the aim of resolving the crisis peacefully.

Thirdly, a lasting improvement in the situation in Nicaragua will depend on close cooperation with multilateral organizations, primarily the Organization of American States and the United Nations. In that regard, France deplores the decision of the Nicaraguan authorities to request the departure of the mission of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights following the publication of its report on the situation in Nicaragua. We call on the Nicaraguan authorities to reconsider their decision and cooperate with the Office of the High Commissioner, in accordance with its mandate and independence. Such cooperation is essential to identifying those responsible and bringing them to justice.

France has therefore expressed its support for the establishment of an autonomous and independent international investigation mechanism, as recommended by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. The Special Monitoring Mechanism for Nicaragua, which was established in June, must, under the supervision of the Interdisciplinary Group of Independent Experts, shed light on issues of extreme gravity. We also welcome the establishment of the Verification and Security Commission — to include 12 members of the national dialogue, representatives of the Church, the United Nations, the Organization of American States the Inter-American Commission and the European Union — to verify the establishment of conditions for peace in the country.

It is true that mechanisms for resolving the crisis not only exist but are within reach. We therefore strongly encourage the Nicaraguan Government to use them in order to return Nicaragua to the path of prosperity and political stability to which its people aspire.

Mr. Van Oosterom (Netherlands): First, let me thank Ambassador Pierce and her team for their effective and efficient presidency of the Council last month. Their time management was commendable. Secondly, we warmly congratulate you, Madam President, and your team on your assumption of the presidency of the Council for this month. Let me assure you of the support of our Mission and of my personal support for your presidency in this ambitious month.

We welcome the opportunity to discuss the cooperation between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations with regard to the situation in Nicaragua. We thank Mr. Gonzalo Koncke and Mr. Felix Maradiaga for their valuable briefings.

Historically, warm relations have existed between the peoples of the Kingdom of the Netherlands and of Nicaragua. That is the premise of our continued engagement with Nicaragua and why we have had intense conversations with Minister Moncada about our deep concerns with regard to recent developments in Nicaragua. We welcome Nicaragua's Minister for Foreign Affairs to the Council today and believe that dialogue is a crucial element of prevention. We thank him for being here with us.

I will focus on three issues today: first, our concerns about the situation in Nicaragua; secondly, the issue of prevention and, thirdly, support for mediation efforts.

My first point involves our concerns about the current situation. The Kingdom of the Netherlands is deeply concerned about unfolding events in Nicaragua since 18 April. More than 350 people have been killed and more than 2,000 people have been wounded since then. The Government has not protected its civilians. It has not guaranteed the right to peaceful protest. It has not protected freedom of the press. On the contrary, there have been many serious human rights violations, including the disproportionate use of violence, extrajudicial killings and disappearances. According to reliable sources, a majority of those crimes has been perpetrated by Government officials, para-police groups and armed third persons. We are specifically concerned about the violence, repression and arbitrary detentions that have been taking place since the start of those protests. In addition, there are signs that access to health care for protesters has been obstructed, while more than 100 medical personnel have been dismissed. We have a simple message — the repression must stop.

That brings me to my second point: the issue of prevention. We welcome the fact that we are discussing the situation in Nicaragua in the Security Council today, and we see this as an opportunity for dialogue. We therefore welcome the briefing by Mr. Maradiaga, and we look forward to the statement to be delivered by Minister Moncada. Early warning and conflict prevention are important priorities for the Kingdom of the Netherlands. We see a key role for the Security Council to play in conflict prevention by addressing root causes, such as human rights violations. The Council should therefore support preventive and mediation efforts with regard to the situation in Nicaragua, with a view to sustaining stability and promoting peace in the region.

That brings me to my third point: the role of local and regional organizations. In our view, the engagement of local and regional actors is essential to addressing the current crisis. We applaud the hard work of the Bishops of the Catholic Church in Nicaragua as mediator. We applaud the important efforts of the Organization of American States (OAS) to support the dialogue in Nicaragua. We also welcomed the early invitations by the Nicaraguan authorities to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Inter-American Commission for Human Rights and the European Union to visit Nicaragua and support the dialogue.

However, the lack of progress regarding the dialogue is worrying. We regret the decision of the Nicaraguan Government to terminate the presence of the mission of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, which runs contrary to the spirit of dialogue and the principles of full accountability for human rights violations and securing justice for victims of violence. We expect the authorities to seriously consider the findings of the High Commissioner and to take urgent action to implement recommendations in his report. We urge the Nicaraguan authorities to fully cooperate with the relevant international organizations and to provide the necessary access to information. The independent investigation into human rights violations is paramount to a sustainable solution. Perpetrators of human rights violations must be brought to justice.

The Kingdom of the Netherlands, in that regard, supports the activities of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, as well as those of the Interdisciplinary Group of Independent Experts of the OAS, which aim at strengthening Nicaraguan institutions and contributing to investigations into recent violent events. We urge Nicaragua to fully cooperate with the OAS and the United Nations.

I should like to conclude my statement in Spanish.

(*spoke in Spanish*)

We call on the Nicaraguan authorities to immediately cease the violence and to protect their citizens and their right to peaceful protest. We welcome and further encourage the firm engagement of the Organization of American States and other regional actors in addressing the current situation. We call on the Nicaraguan authorities to implement the recommendations made by the Inter-American Commission for Human Rights and by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights without delay, and in particular to take all the steps necessary to reactivate the dialogue on democratization and justice, which will pave the way to a sustainable peaceful solution to the situation in Nicaragua.

The President: I am quite impressed by the Spanish of the representative of the Netherlands.

Mr. Adom (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, let me to extend to you, Madam, my delegation's warm congratulations and wishes for your country's every success during its presidency of the Security Council for the month of September. I am also pleased to offer my delegation's thanks to Ambassador Karen Pierce and her entire team for the mastery with which they conducted the work of the Security Council, as well as for the relevance of the topics addressed during the month of August under the presidency of the United Kingdom.

I thank Mr. Gonzalo Koncke, Chief of Staff to the Secretary General of the Organization of American States, and Mr. Felix Maradiaga, civil society representative, for their briefings. I welcome the presence among us of Mr. Denis Ronaldo Moncada Colindres, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nicaragua.

Since April, Nicaragua has been in the throes of sociopolitical demonstrations that hardly seem to have let up. The vicious cycle of repressed social protests has left more than 300 people dead and led to the displacement of more than 23,000 Nicaraguans to neighbouring Costa Rica, where shelters are struggling to cope with the increasing flow and needs of refugees. The dialogue for peace between the Government and civil society, led under the auspices of the Episcopal Conference of Nicaragua with a view to achieving a peaceful solution to the crisis, has yet to achieve the hoped-for results. Mutual mistrust between the Government and civil society organizations has spread to the Episcopate, which the Government is accusing of bias by favouring the protesters, thereby adding to the complex nature of the situation.

The urgent calls of the international community for the immediate cessation of violence — a prerequisite for establishing an environment conducive to the resumption of the sociopolitical dialogue — have gone unanswered. In that regard, the recent expulsion from Nicaragua of members of the mission of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights does not bode well. Concerning the current stalemate and the ongoing deterioration of the sociopolitical situation, Côte d'Ivoire would like to express its deep concern about the risks associated with the deteriorating conflict, the long-term humanitarian consequences of which — although it is internal in nature at present — could be unprecedented for Nicaragua and neighbouring countries. My country therefore urges the Government and civil society organizations to renounce violence and resume negotiations without delay for a peaceful resolution of the crisis in the best interests of the people of Nicaragua.

The recent history of humankind reminds us of many instances in which what were initially low-intensity crises developed into armed conflicts with various and often tragic humanitarian consequences. Such tragedies, which continue to shake our collective conscience, have arisen owing to the obstinacy of the parties concerned in failing to recognize the gravity of the situation in their country, on the one hand, and, on the other, to a lack of interest and adequate reaction on the part of the international community. As preventive diplomacy is unanimously accepted as the most effective means of conflict prevention and management, my country urges the United Nations and the Organization of American States to use the range of tools available to them in the framework of a preventive approach so as to establish a constructive dialogue with and among all the actors in the crisis in Nicaragua.

That is the gist of our support for the proposal made by members of the Council to include the Nicaraguan issue on the programme of work for September. My country therefore echoes the call made by Secretary-General António Gutteres for an immediate end to the violence and the resumption of inter-Nicaraguan political dialogue — the only guarantee for a lasting return to peace and stability.

In conclusion, Côte d'Ivoire remains convinced that a return to a peaceful situation in Nicaragua will be possible only if Nicaraguans themselves are willing and committed to take ownership of existing mechanisms to assuage tensions within Nicaragua and the subregion. In our opinion, it is imperative for the Council to support them in that regard.

Ms. Wronecka (Poland): I thank you very much, Madam President, for convening this meeting. I offer you our full support during your presidency in September. Allow me, as well, to thank our briefers, Mr. Gonzalo Koncke and Mr. Felix Maradiaga, for their briefings. I also welcome among us His Excellency Mr. Denis Moncada Colindres, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nicaragua.

Just a week ago, we discussed mediation and the peaceful settlement of disputes in this Chamber (see S/PV.8334). More than 70 Member States reaffirmed their commitment to preventive diplomacy and the peaceful settlement of disputes, whether inter-State and internal conflicts. Therefore, let me just remind members of the Security Council that we strongly agree with the Secretary-General's policy of prioritizing conflict prevention and addressing the root causes of conflicts before they escalate and have an irreversible impact.

It is our responsibility, as members of the international community, to not turn a blind eye to crises, such as the one occurring right now in Nicaragua. Instead of shying away, we need to see — just as the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights calls us to see in its recent report on Nicaragua — the current situation in a broader context and realize what possible consequences it might provoke in the region.

Poland is deeply worried about the recent developments in Nicaragua. We are concerned about the repression and violence, which have resulted in hundreds of deaths and thousands of injured. The Nicaraguan authorities must fully respect and comply with the applicable human rights standards regarding the right to peaceful assembly and freedom of speech. There is no justification for the excessive and disproportionate use of force against peaceful demonstrators, just as there is no justification for the harassment and intimidation of civil and political activists.

Regional organizations can often prove themselves far more efficient in mediation. Their geographical proximity to the actors involved in conflicts leads to the deeper comprehension of the specificity of a particular problem, and they are better prepared to identify key nuances that we might simply overlook. They also demonstrate an excellent ability to lay the foundation for more profound and sustainable reconciliation.

That is why Poland takes note of the efforts undertaken by the Organization of American States (OAS) to resolve the crisis, followed by attentive monitoring of the situation. We would like to express our strong support for the work that is carried out by the OAS, and we hope that the inclusive and fruitful dialogue, with the participation of the Interdisciplinary Group of Independent Experts for Nicaragua, will commence. At the same time, we are very concerned that the parties so far have demonstrated little will or ability to participate in such a dialogue. We encourage the conflicting parties to take up an open and genuine dialogue, start cooperating with the OAS and take advantage of the forum it offers. If they are unwilling to do so, perhaps a need for an external peace broker or dialogue facilitator should be recognized.

We have to once and for all leave behind the delusion that we have the luxury of time to spend on

discussions or deliberations. Given the high stakes in this case — such as the lives of our Nicaraguan friends — time is a comfort we simply cannot afford. Therefore, we call upon the Nicaraguan Government to not perceive the discussion we are having today as an attempt to stigmatize its country. We believe that our meeting is not about any sort of blame game or pointing fingers, but rather about acknowledging the gravity of the problem and offering a helping hand in solving it.

Mr. Umarov (Kazakhstan): My delegation congratulates you and your team, Madam President, on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for the month of September, and conveys our felicitations to our United Kingdom colleagues for their able stewardship of the Council last month.

At the outset, we would like to thank our briefers for their interventions. We also welcome the presence of Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nicaragua Dennis Moncada Colindres.

Kazakhstan is closely monitoring developments in Nicaragua. We acknowledge the right to peaceful assembly and condemn all acts of violence and attacks on civilians. We express our deepest sympathy and condolences to the families of those killed.

We firmly believe that the Government and the people of Nicaragua will be able to overcome the current situation and find a solution to the problems for the sake of peace and security, with due respect for fundamental rights and freedoms. Such a solution should be peaceful and democratic and found within the framework of the Constitution, in particular by promoting dialogue between the country's political actors. We also believe that all stakeholders should refrain from violent or provocative actions.

We note with satisfaction that the level of tension in Nicaragua has decreased and the situation is gradually normalizing. We positively commend the launch of the national dialogue in Nicaragua, with the mediation of the Catholic Church, which is called upon to develop an algorithm for resolving existing problems in the interest of ensuring the sustainable development of the country.

Kazakhstan is a firm proponent of the preventive diplomacy principle, but is against external influence in the internal affairs of independent countries under that pretext. Kazakhstan is strongly committed to the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-interference in the internal affairs of other States.

The situation in Nicaragua does not constitute a threat to international peace and security, and therefore should not fall under the mandate of the Security Council. At this stage, the United Nations involvement should be only through the mediation efforts of the Secretary-General's good offices.

Lastly, we believe that stronger engagement and respectful cooperation by regional organizations, particularly the Organization of American States, in resolving the situation would be a crucial step towards the normalization of the political situation in Nicaragua.

Mr. Skoog (Sweden): I extend congratulations to you, Madam President, and the United States for assuming the presidency of the Security Council. We offer our respect, gratitude and admiration to the United Kingdom for the way it presided over the Council last month.

I would like to thank Mr. Gonzalo Koncke from the Organization of American States (OAS) and Mr. Felix Maradiaga for their important briefings to the Council this morning, and also acknowledge the presence of Foreign Minister Moncada Colindres at the Council this morning.

Both the OAS and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) have reported on the unfolding of the human rights crisis in Nicaragua. Hundreds have been killed. There are worrying reports of targeted violence and persecution of peaceful protesters and human rights defenders, as well as of incidents of torture and sexual violence against detainees. Accounts of the existence and use of armed elements loyal to the Government — or so-called shock forces and mobs — are particularly alarming. The crisis has potential regional implications, and needs to be addressed in a spirit of preventive diplomacy. The Security Council's role is, first and foremost, to support those efforts.

We urge the Government to revive national dialogue with all the parties concerned, including the opposition, civil society and human rights defenders. Women's participation in that dialogue is crucial. That is the only way to ensure a peaceful solution to the current crisis.

We condemn all violence, including from protesters. The Nicaraguan authorities must act in accordance with international human rights law. Protests that are peaceful should never be hindered, and violence against

those who use their right to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly can never be justified.

Regional and subregional organizations are key to preventing emerging crises from evolving further, as everyone has said today and the briefings illustrate. We commend and support the OAS for its role in promoting a peaceful solution to the situation in Nicaragua. In that regard, we call on the Government to fully engage with the OAS, as well as with the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights.

The United Nations also has an important role to play in supporting a peaceful solution to the crisis, not least in supporting regional efforts and with preventive diplomacy. We regret the expulsion of the OHCHR mission last week, and hope that they will be invited back without delay. We welcome the Secretary-General's efforts and encourage him to continue to stay actively engaged. The European Union will continue its dialogue with all parties and actively support efforts of the broader international community.

Sweden has long-standing and friendly relations with Nicaragua. We are fully committed to supporting the country in finding a peaceful solution to the current crisis. Resuming inclusive, meaningful national dialogue, reinvigorating democracy, restoring the rule of law, respecting human rights and re-engaging with the international community, including the United Nations and the OAS, will be crucial to that.

Ms. Guadey (Ethiopia): We thank Mr. Gonzalo Koncke, Chief of Staff to the Secretary General of the Organization of American States, and Mr. Felix Maradiaga for their respective briefings. We would also like to welcome the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nicaragua, His Excellency Mr. Denis Moncada Colindres.

We have been following the developments in Nicaragua. Since we are not from the region, we do not claim to have knowledge and/or expertise of the unfolding situation, but we have listened very carefully to the different views that have been expressed.

We maintain that, when it comes to issues related to our region, and Africa as a whole, the views of the countries concerned, as well as the region and the continent, need to be fully considered. Past experiences have shown that international engagement in any situation, including by the United Nations, can be effective and meaningful only if it is carefully calibrated and coordinated with regional efforts.

When it comes to the situation in Nicaragua in particular, we have not seen any indication that convinces us that it constitutes a threat to international peace and security. That is the basis for any involvement by the Security Council, as provided for by the Charter of the United Nations. We are concerned by the increasing violence in the country, but at this stage the situation remains an internal matter of Nicaraguans, which needs to be addressed through genuine dialogue and negotiation among the political stakeholders to find a peaceful solution to the crisis. We appreciate and support the ongoing efforts in that direction.

We know the history of the region and the sensitivities surrounding any perceived external involvement from outside the region. That is why there is a need for caution in handling the situation in Nicaragua. We understand that some members think there is a case for preventive diplomacy. It is indeed very important that every possible effort be made to prevent the situation from getting out of hand. We know that is best done discretely through the deployment of good offices. Otherwise, there is a possibility that such action may send the wrong signal to the Nicaraguan stakeholders and undermine the ongoing dialogue process.

We are aware that the Secretary-General has already been approached to assist, and we note his readiness to do so. That, in our opinion, is the best way forward. We hope that kind of constructive engagement will continue with a view to de-escalating the political tension and finding a peaceful solution to the crisis.

Mr. Ndong Mba (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate Ambassador Karen Pierce and the delegation of the United Kingdom for their very successful presidency of the Security Council in August. We also wish you, Madam President, and your delegation success during your presidency, and we guarantee you all the necessary support from the delegation of Equatorial Guinea.

Allow me to welcome to this meeting His Excellency Mr. Denis Moncada Colindres, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nicaragua. I also thank Mr. Gonzalo Koncke, Chief of Staff to the Secretary General of the Organization of American States, and the representative of civil society, Mr. Felix Maradiaga, for their comprehensive briefings, which have provided a very timely and detailed explanation of the situation in Nicaragua.

Over the past decade, we have witnessed numerous situations that have resulted in death, injury and other

atrocities as a result of civil war and acts of terrorism, where the devastating effects of weapons have become a reality, leaving victims in many parts of the world.

In accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, we, the Member States, entrust to the Security Council the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, and we agree that, in carrying out its functions under that responsibility, the Council act on our behalf. Such a task, in spite of all the difficulties, continues to be vigorously undertaken.

In view of the continuing threats to international peace and security, the action of the Security Council, although notable in many areas, needs to substantially and significantly improve, envisaging what is set out in Chapter VIII of the Charter, which defines the mechanisms and means necessary for interaction among the Security Council and regional and subregional organizations, in order to strenthen the prevention, management and peaceful settlement of conflicts. Our Government recognizes, appreciates and greatly values the concern of both the Security Council and regional and subregional organizations in the face of any threat to international peace and security.

In Nicaragua's case, our Government expresses its great concern about the political crisis that began in the country in April and the popular uprisings that are taking place in several cities of the country, which are led by students and supported by workers, professionals and entrepreneurs. Such events have claimed hundreds of lives and led to numerous injuries, considerably affecting the socioeconomic situation of the country, as illustrated in the briefings we have just heard.

The Government of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea recognizes the right of citizens to demonstrate, which is also recognized by the Nicaraguan legal system. Such demonstrations must be peaceful expressions of the population and their convening, development and conclusion must be regulated by the law, while also respecting the rights of those who do not support them.

We are convinced that any differences must be resolved through an ongoing quest for a peaceful solution, through consultation and dialogue, always in accordance with the principles of international law and in accordance with absolute respect for human rights. We therefore urge the parties to continue the national dialogue and, to that end, seek the support of international organizations to act as mediators.

I should like to conclude my statement by, on the one hand, encouraging the international community — in particular the Organization of American States and the Catholic Church — to continue its constructive mediation role so as to establish the necessary external conditions to facilitate consultations, dialogue and agreement to avert a deterioration of the situation and help the parties find a negotiated solution and, on the other hand, by calling on the Government of Nicaragua to open up to the international community and facilitate the putting in place of the mechanisms needed for a resolution of the serious political crisis the country is experiencing. That is how we truly believe we can address the situation in Nicaragua, and not by including it on the programme of work of the Security Council.

Mr. Llorentty Soliz (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, allow me to join in the expressions of gratitude and congratulations to Ambassador Pierce and her team on their steering of the presidency of the Security Council last month. I also wish you and your delegation, Madam President, the greatest success this month.

It is also a privilege for me to join in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Denis Moncada Colindres, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nicaragua, a fraternal country. I also wish to welcome someone whom I consider as a personal friend, Mr. Gonzalo Koncke, Chief of Staff to the Secretary General of the Organization of American States.

I take the floor to reiterate our rejection of the holding of today's meeting in the Security Council. This is a place for considering matters related to threats to international peace and security, and Nicaragua does not constitute any kind of threat to the region or the world. The members of the Security Souncil, in particular its permanent members, have the responsibility of avoiding turning this organ into an instrument for political or ideological ends. We therefore think it absurd that, under the theme "regional and subregional cooperation", our attention is being drawn to the internal situation of a Member State of this Organization.

Likewise, Bolivia believes that the argument for addressing the situation in Nicaragua today under Article 34 of the Charter of the United Nations is not applicable, for no dispute or situation is being investigated that could lead to international friction or give rise to a dispute whose continuance could

endanger the maintenance of international peace and security, since at present the reality in Nicaragua is relatively calm.

Along the same lines, in accordance with Article 54 of the Charter of the United Nations, regional bodies shall keep the Security Council informed of activities undertaken or being contemplated under regional arrangements for the maintenance of international peace and security.

None of those conditions are met when one considers the situation in Nicaragua.

By way of a review of the events, the mobilizations in Nicaragua took place in April and May. The Nicaraguan State resorted to legal and constitutional domestic mechanisms to pacify the country and called for a national dialogue with the mediation of the Catholic Church, all with the primary aim of pacifying Nicaragua and identifying and bringing to justice those responsible for fanning and perpetrating the violence.

All of us are aware of the regrettable toll of hundreds of people killed or wounded. We are convinced that, with the efforts by Nicaragua's democratic institutions, those responsible will be duly identified, tried and punished to the fullest extent of the law.

Bolivia opposed the holding of this meeting based on the Charter of the United Nations, which clearly establishes the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of Member States. We also oppose the manipulation of agenda items whose legitimate purpose is to support cooperation mechanisms with regional organizations to serve as an umbrella under which everything can fit.

We oppose the manipulation of the Secretary-General's strategy for preventive diplomacy for purposes far removed from helping to alleviate a crisis situation, which in fact serves to make the situation worse by trying to put a Member State on the stand as accused and giving the right to take the floor to persons who represent only a single point of view on the conflict. This approach undermines multilateralism, saps the momentum of preventive diplomacy, puts dialogue between the parties further out of reach and violates the principles of sovereignty and equality among States.

Not to agree with the representative of the United Kingdom when she referred to history, but history is indeed very important. Not only does it make it possible for us to have perspective on what is happening, but it lets us learn relevant lessons. Regrettably, Nicaragua's history over the course of almost two centuries has been marked by the interventionist obsession of the United States. It is worth mentioning the lunacy of the incursion by the mercenary William Walker who, supported by American businessmen and politicians, invaded Nicaragua militarily and proclaimed himself President of Nicaragua in 1856. Mercenary invasion was followed by military invasion when the United States Marines invaded Nicaragua in 1912, where they remained until 1933 when the rebellion of Augusto César Sandino managed to expel them from the country. Later, the United States left in power the national guard headed by Anastasio Somoza — one of the cruellest dictatorships ever in Latin America — who governed for the benefit of himself and his family for more than 40 years, with the full financial, economic and military support of that country. When, in 1979, the Sandinista National Liberation Front finally managed to defeat the Somoza dictatorship, the United States intervened again, arming and supporting the contras and sabotaging the Nicaraguan economy until it almost destroyed it.

That is why history is important.

It could be said that there has not been a moment in its history in which Nicaragua has not been subject to intervention, abuse, interference and threats. In fact, as the representative of the Russian Federation aptly reminded us, in 1986 the International Court of Justice, one of the main organs of our system, found the United States responsible for

> "training, arming, equipping, financing and supplying the contra forces, to the detriment of the Nicaraguan republic ... infringing upon the obligation incumbent upon it under customary international law not to intervene in the affairs of another state".

Interventionism, interference and the financing of opposition groups constitute the big elephant in the room that is not discussed in this Chamber. The real interest of the United States is not the defence of democracy; were it so it would not employ double standards or give speeches about defending democracy while at the same time financing coups d'état and destabilizing democratically elected Governments.

The real interest is not in defending human rights; otherwise States claiming to do so would sign all the international agreements under our system

on defending and promoting human rights. If human rights were the real reason, the United States would not have abandoned the Human Rights Council, one of the greatest achievements of our system. If it were really about human rights torture would not be promoted and asylum seekers would not be put in jail, giving rise to the inhumane separation of parents from their children.

The recent history of interventionism is a long one. We need only consider what happened in regions such as the Middle East. As we have said on many occasions, in Libya, Syria and in Iraq these policies have created the worst situations in this century. What is the true interest? The true interest is to promote situations of instability and to exploit them to change regimes and to control natural resources. That is the key objective.

We listened closely to the briefing given by the Chief of Staff to the Secretary General of the Organization of American States, and we agree with him on several of the issues, including with respect to the fact that it is not just Nicaragua but all countries of our region and the world that need democracy, justice, truth and peace. To that I would add that, in addition to democracy, justice, truth and peace, it is absolutely essential that States be free of interference and interventionism. How many millions of dollars have been earmarked to finance opposition groups in Nicaragua? What is the source of those millions of dollars to finance instability in countries such as Nicaragua? Moreover, in speaking of the multilateral system, we also need to consider the enforcement of unilateral sanctions, which are violations of international law.

If the international community truly wishes to help Nicaragua to resolve its problems, it must do so in the framework of the Charter of the United Nations. It must respect Nicaragua's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity, while also condemning any interference, interventionism or policy of regime change. The response to the problems of Nicaragua must be provided by the Nicaraguans themselves within the framework of the rule of law.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): At the outset, I should like to congratulate you, Madam President, and your team on assuming the September presidency of the Security Council. I also thank the United Kingdom for its work in the presidency of the Council in August.

China has consistently called for respect for countries' sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity, as well as for adherence to the principle of non-interference in internal affairs. China is of the view that the situation in Nicaragua does not constitute a threat to international peace and security and that the Security Council should not get involved.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of the United States.

One month ago, I stood on the Simón Bolívar International Bridge that connects Venezuela with Colombia, and watched an unending line of desperate people trying to escape tyranny. The irony and the tragedy of this bridge should not be lost on any of us. Named for a great liberator, the Simón Bolívar International Bridge is now an escape route for a people starved and imprisoned by a dictator.

But there is also a lesson in the thousands of Venezuelans who cross the Simón Bolívar International Bridge every day. Fundamental human rights are denied when a man's ability to feed his family is destroyed. Human rights are denied when a woman loses her voice in determining her own future and when human rights are denied. The violence and instability that follow spill over borders. One nation's crisis becomes a region's crisis — even a global crisis. This process is well advanced in Venezuela. To those who say that this is only a matter of Venezuelan internal affairs, I would say: "Tell that to the people of Colombia. Tell that to the people of Peru. Tell that to the people of Brazil. And tell that to the people of Ecuador". We are long past the point at which the narco-State of Venezuela stopped being a Venezuelan security problem.

And now we are seeing the start of this disastrous cycle in Nicaragua. The spread of tyranny follows a predictable pattern. Media and opposition parties are silenced. Corruption chokes off economic opportunity. Institutions that people rely on outside the State, such as universities, trade unions and the church, are attacked and demonized The regime unleashes its militants to kidnap, torture and execute dissidents. The dictator hides behind those forces that terrorize and surveil their neighbours — all at the regime's instruction and on its behalf. And when the people inevitably rise up in protest, they are met with more violence, more imprisonment and more death. Then the exodus begins.

All of this has already happened in Venezuela. All of this is now happening in Nicaragua. Daniel Ortega has adopted the tactics of the dictators he once claimed to oppose. We should not be surprised.

Daniel Ortega and Nicolás Maduro are cut from the same corrupt cloth. They are both students of the same failed ideology, and they are both dictators who live in fear of their own people. The Ortega regime has long controlled the media by ensuring that television and radio stations are in the hands of family, friends and corrupt allies. Ortega banned opposition parties and rigged the Nicaraguan Constitution to allow him three uninterrupted five-year terms, and he named his wife Vice-President to continue to hold the power and dominate Nicaragua when he passes from the scene.

In classic authoritarian fashion, Ortega is attempting to destroy the most respected institution that is rightfully standing up for the Nicaraguan people — the Catholic Church. Clerics have been attacked. Catholic charities have been looted. Churches have been desecrated. Now, he is clinging to power in an equally authoritarian fashion by killing, detaining and brutalizing anyone who dares to oppose him. According to the Nicaraguan Association for Human Rights, over 448 people have been killed and over 2,000 have been injured.

Predictably, the Ortega regime has unleashed its allied forces and turned citizens against citizens. Hundreds of the regime's opponents have been kidnapped, including six national dialogue student leaders who were taken just yesterday. Hundreds more have disappeared, and just last week he expelled the United Nations human rights delegation. All of the detained students and other political prisoners should be released immediately.

The result is the beginnings of the exodus of desperate Nicaraguans out of their homeland. Over 25,000 Nicaraguans have migrated to Costa Rica since the start of the crisis, with Honduras, Panama and Mexico also receiving Nicaraguan migrants and asylum seekers.

With each passing day, Nicaragua travels further down a familiar path. It is a path that Syria has taken. It is a path that Venezuela has taken. The Security Council should not and cannot be a passive observer as Nicaragua continues to decline into a failed, corrupt and dictatorial State, because we know where this path leads. The Syrian exodus has produced millions of refugees, sowing instability throughout the Middle East and Europe. The Venezuelan exodus has become the largest displacement of people in the history of Latin America. A Nicaraguan exodus would overwhelm its neighbours and create a surge of migrants and asylum seekers in Central America.

Today, the United States stands in solidarity with the people of Nicaragua, not just because we believe in fundamental human rights and expect them to be honoured, but also because our future is bound up with our neighbours in the Americas. Their prosperity is our prosperity, and their security is our security. On my trip to Colombia, I met with Venezuelan families who walked three hours in the blazing heat every day to cross the Simón Bolívar International Bridge for just a single meal — the only meal that they would have that day.

Nicaraguan families are not that desperate yet, but we know what is coming if nothing changes. We still have the opportunity to prevent history from repeating itself. We still have the opportunity to prevent tyranny from threatening peace and security. The Nicaraguan people are demanding a voice in their future. They are calling for the release of arbitrarily jailed protesters. They are calling for an end to the dictatorship. They are calling for their own freedom.

On 18 July, the Organization of American States (OAS) overwhelmingly adopted a resolution holding the Nicaraguan Government responsible for ongoing human rights abuses, and has since established a working group to consider the situation in Nicaragua. The OAS has shown great leadership in addressing the tragic developments in Nicaragua. The United States fully supports the efforts of the OAS.

For the sake of the people of Nicaragua, for the security of the region and for the respect for human rights that we are bound to uphold, I applaud the Security Council for adding its powerful voice to those calling for an end to tyranny in Nicaragua.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

I give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nicaragua.

Mr. Moncada Colindres (Nicaragua) (*spoke in Spanish*): Nicaraguans love peace. We comprehensively strengthen security and promote and champion human rights. The Government and the people of Nicaragua defend the principles of independence, sovereignty and self-determination of peoples, as set forth in the Charter of the United Nations. As such, we call for and demand an end to all interventionist policies that

violate international law. There is consensus in the Security Council that Nicaragua does not represent a threat to international peace and security. That is why its inclusion on the agenda of this meeting is clear interference in the internal affairs of Nicaragua and a violation of the United Nations Charter and international law.

The reality, as recognized by the international community, including United Nations organs and agencies, is that our country has been a factor for regional stability, peace and security — with strong positive indicators of economic, political and social development, poverty reduction, gender equality and citizen security. It has been an example and a protective barrier in the fight against transnational organized crime, terrorism and drug trafficking activity in the region.

According to the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, Nicaragua has shown an average sustained economic growth of 5.2 per cent in recent years, which has allowed it to almost double its gross domestic product. One of the most significant advances in Nicaragua is a sustained reduction of poverty. General poverty and extreme poverty at the national level have been halved in recent years, as recognized by various international organizations.

Nicaragua is party to human rights agreements and conventions and honours its commitments. The Council is not the appropriate body to address this issue. The topic of human rights should be discussed through constructive, non-confrontational and non-politicized dialogue, based on the principles of universality, impartiality, objectivity and non-selectivity. Our people will continue to champion the peace, stability, security and progress that we have been building.

The people of Nicaragua has a right to live and progress in peace. It has the right to continue to make progress in eradicating poverty and to pursue its quest, in sovereignty and dignity, for sustainable development and a decent life for our people, without exclusion of any kind, in order to reach the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Our Government and people reaffirm their deep commitment to peace and therefore promote real dialogue among Nicaraguans. That is the path; that is the route that we are taking and the most effective dialogue there can be — dialogue within our people and within our family. That is the dialogue that the people of Nicaragua have built, and we will continue to ensure the peace, stability and progress of our country.

We thank the States members of the Security Council and our brother States that have recognized that Nicaragua poses no threat to international peace and security and that it does not deserve being included on the Council's agenda. That solidarity is consistent with the reality of our country and with the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations.

We recall that the United States was condemned by the International Court of Justice in The Hague in 1986 for military activities, paramilitaries activities and acts of terrorism against Nicaragua. The people of Nicaragua and the international community waits for the United States to fulfil the terms of its conviction by compensating Nicaragua and ceasing all acts of aggression and interference. That is how the United States can respect the human rights of the people of Nicaragua.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Costa Rica.

Mr. Carazo Zeledón (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): Costa Rica thanks the presidency of the Council for having convened this meeting on the situation in Nicaragua. We believe it to be appropriate, timely and necessary. The report entitled "Violations of human rights and abuses in the context of the protests in Nicaragua", issued by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, attests to the "systematic erosion of human rights" in that country. This meeting should give us the opportunity to find the way to guarantee the full respect of human rights in Nicaragua in order to maintain social peace and ensure sustainable regional peace.

We have listened carefully to the briefings of Mr. Gonzalo Koncke, Chief of Staff to the Secretary General of the Organization of American States, and Mr. Felix Maradiaga, to whom we express our gratitude. We paid close attention to the statement made by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nicaragua, Mr. Denis Moncada Colindres.

The situation in the brotherly country to the north is a priority issue for the Nicaraguan people and for the Costa Rica, for everything that occurs in that small, interconnected geographical area has a direct or indirect impact on us and, similarly, on the entire

Central American region. Costa Rica cannot and will not be indifferent to the suffering and uncertainty of those whom we consider our brothers and sisters. Costa Rica has been consistent in expressing its concern about the deterioration of the rule of law and respect for human rights in Nicaragua. Since April, when the conflict began, we have expressed our dismay about the escalation of violence and repression, which, according to the report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, has already claimed hundreds of lives and led to a regrettable wave of serious human rights violations, thereby threatening the security and safety of thousands of Nicaraguans.

As we have stated and as the report reflects, we believe that extrajudicial executions, forced disappearances, the obstruction of access to medical care, widespread arbitrary or illegal detentions, ill-treatment and cases of torture and sexual violence in detention centres are all unacceptable. They have led to the systematic erosion of the human rights of the Nicaraguan people, as well as to the selective repression and intimidation of demonstrators and their families, students, journalists, social leaders, human rights defenders and mediators, among others. In line with international law, it must be recalled that each country has the primary responsibility to guarantee the security and protection of its inhabitants and, failing that, the international community must protect the human rights of those people.

For months we have seen the serious migration, social and economic repercussions, which have not remained confined to Nicaragua but have spread beyond its borders. The deepening of the political, social and economic crisis in Nicaragua, repression and lack of respect for fundamental freedoms and human rights on the part of the authorities could cause an unbridled escalation of the crisis, which would have a direct impact on the stability and development of the countries and peoples of Central America. Since the first set of student demonstrations, which were repressed with unusual violence, Costa Rica has experienced a considerable increase in refugee applications and migration flows from Nicaragua. The number of Nicaraguan migrants has increased considerably, including in particular vulnerable people seeking safety and better opportunities. The number of refugee applications has also increased — from four applications in January this year to 4,074 in August alone. In total, during the first eight months of this year, more than 12,830 refugee applications were received from Nicaraguan citizens.

As a country of destination, transit and origin that respects human rights, Costa Rica's priority has always been the protection, respect, dignity and safety of people. In order to meet those objectives, Costa Rican institutions have always responded responsibly, as it has in this case, in an orderly manner and in compliance with national and international standards. Similarly, since the beginning, we have worked closely with the relevant international organizations and United Nations agencies, such as the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Organization for Migration, among others, with which we maintain a close relationship and from whom we have received considerable support.

Our country wishes to reiterate its conviction that the path to committed and effective dialogue must be the solution to the political conflict that plagues the Nicaraguan people, with whom we share deep historical ties of neighbourliness, closeness and brotherhood. We urge the Nicaraguan Government to re-establish conditions that ensure that dialogue among all parties is possible. Given the current circumstances, Costa Rica cannot remain silent. We will continue to speak out in defence of a population subjected to arbitrary actions that constitute a breach of the obligations under various different human rights covenants and principles. Costa Rica urges a prompt response from the Nicaraguan Government and the international community to address the grave and unsustainable situation. We will continue to speak out until reason, good judgement and full respect for human rights return to Nicaragua.

Costa Rica reiterates its support for, and commitment to, actions promoted by the Organization of American States (OAS), which are now being presented to the Council. Our country welcomes in particular the adoption of resolution CP/RES. 1108 of the Permanent Council of the OAS, which resolves to

> "reiterate its vigorous condemnation of and grave concern over all acts of violence, repression, and human rights violations and abuses committed by police, parapolice groups, and others against the people of Nicaragua".

We echo the Permanent Council's request to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, the Department of Electoral Cooperation and Observation, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for

Human Rights, the Secretary General of the OAS and the European Union to take steps to help curb the crisis in Nicaragua. We request the international community and the Security Council to urge the Government of Nicaragua to immediately cease its disproportionate use of force, comply with all the recommendations of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the current situation in Nicaragua and resume a serious dialogue, based on respect, commitment and trust — the only path to a consensus-based solution among Nicaraguans and for Nicaraguans.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

Mr. Suárez Moreno (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, as a responsible member of the international community, has requested to participate in this Security Council briefing, with an unwavering commitment to preserving the Latin American and Caribbean region as a zone of peace, as agreed by the Heads of State and Government of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States in 2014.

Allow me first refer to the relevant procedures and, accordingly, express our rejection of the practice of exploiting items on the agenda of the Security Council, such as today's, so as to force us into addressing the domestic situations of sovereign countries. This constitutes a flagrant violation of the mandates of this organ and of the Charter of the United Nations itself, while at the same time it sets a dangerous precedent and once again attests to the arbitrary nature of this presidency. In that regard, Venezuela also rejects the Security Council's continued appropriation of topics, especially when dealing with matters such as that being addressed today, which in no way constitutes a threat to regional, much less to international peace and security. We therefore emphasize that the consideration of the situation in Nicaragua lies outside of the mandate of the Council, whose competencies are clearly conferred upon it under the Charter.

Venezuela welcomes the social peace and stability enjoyed by the brotherly Nicaraguan people today, after having fallen victim to a four-month wave of terrorist violence that was encouraged, organized and financed by external factors, with the aim of overthrowing the country's legitimate, constitutional and democratically elected Government. We nevertheless sound the alarm that the external aggression is continuing, including through interventionist initiatives imposed by the Organization of American States (OAS), an authority that, as expressed in the budget legislation allocating funds for the United States Department of State for the 2018 fiscal year, responds to the strategic interests of that country. That is why the spokesperson of that agency who spoke earlier is no more than a spokesperson for those interests, which exemplifies once again a flagrant violation of the principle of sovereignty and the right to self-determination of peoples, enshrined in the founding Charter of the Organization, which seems to place an obstacle in the way of the imperial domination of various United States Administrations.

As we have always done, we insist that the norms of international law must be respected. The purposes and principles enshrined by the Charter must be upheld. The peaceful resolution of conflicts must be encouraged and multilateralism maintained. Unilateralism is contrary to the maintenance and building of peace, to which the signatories of the Charter committed themselves. The Nicaraguan people have the wisdom and necessary tools under their national Constitution, inter alia, to resolve their internal affairs and decide their future as a sovereign country without interference of any kind.

The treatment to which Nicaragua has been subjected is very similar to that accorded to Venezuela. Let me give several examples.

Is it not true that United States officials threaten OAS member countries to vote against Venezuela and Nicaragua in that regional forum? Is it not true that Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, the Director of the United States Central Intelligence Agency at that time, said in July 2017 that he had worked with the Governments of Colombia and Mexico to promote a transition in Venezuela? Is it not true that former Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said in August 2017 that he was creating the conditions for a change of Government in Venezuela? Is it not true that in August 2017 President Donald Trump threatened Venezuela with a military intervention? Is it not true that in August of 2017 Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said that the Government of the United States of America is doing everything possible to harm Venezuela economically?

Is it not true that in February, former Secretary of State Rex Tillerson openly called for a military revolt in Venezuela? Is it not true that in May, Madam President, you said that the time had come for President Maduro to

leave, which you reiterated in August on the Colombian-Venezuelan border. Is it not true that in Brazil, in June, Vice-President Mike Pence said that the time had come to take firmer and additional actions to isolate Venezuela? Is it not true that in July, the United States Agency for International Development acknowledged that the United States Embassy in Caracas was encouraging the Venezuelan opposition? Is it not true that in August the White House Spokeswoman threatened Venezuela, warning that all options were on the table? Is it not true that in August, following a meeting on Venezuela with National Security Adviser John Bolton, Senator Marco Rubio declared that the time had come for military intervention?

Is it not true that just this past weekend the representative of the United States to the OAS threatened the integrity of President Nicolás Maduro Moros if he attended the high-level segment of that organization, to be held in the coming weeks? Is it not true that in September the representative of the United States of America to the OAS advocated for a military attack by Brazil, Chile, Colombia and Peru against Venezuela, proposing that the pretext would be an alleged military clash on the borders shared by Brazil and Colombia with Venezuela? Is it not true that in September the United States representative to the OAS labelled as corrupt those countries of the Caribbean that had not joined the United States plan of aggression against Venezuela?

We now ask the honourable members of the Security Council: Who is the aggressor? Nicaragua? Venezuela? We are talking about empirical facts and not fake news, as the Administration likes to describe evidence. Venezuela reiterates its rejection of the manner in which some countries invoke the humanitarian pretext to use the Security Council as a tool to promote their policy of regime change that has caused so much damage to the peoples of Africa and the Middle East, while leading to a humanitarian crisis of a previously unimaginable proportions and fuelling xenophobia in the very countries that yesterday endorsed and applauded the Western invasions of Iraq and Libya under arguments that have proven to be false. Let us not be dragged back into the quagmire of history by one of the most obscurantist Administrations of recent times.

Lastly, since Ambassador Nikki Haley invoked his memory, in 1829 the liberator Simón Bolívar said that the United States seemed to be destined to plague all of the Americas with misery in the name of liberty. History has shown the judiciousness of his premonition.

The meeting rose at 12.20 p.m.